

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the coach from Georgia for sending me in.

Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here today. Except the problem I have is that we were supposed to be finished on October 3. This Congress has provided billions and billions of dollars for projects all over the country. And yet, what is holding us up? Education funding.

I want to congratulate my Republican colleagues for saying, we will do something for school construction around the country. But what about smaller class sizes?

Five years ago, when the Republicans took control, they wanted to eliminate the Department of Education. In fact, they have candidates all over the country saying that is what they want to do.

They are willing to now, instead of abolishing it up here, they just want to transfer funds to private schools. Over 90 percent of our children get their education through public schools. Let us do not take the funds away from them.

My children went to public schools. They graduated. They went to college. They had a great public education. My wife teaches math in a public high school in Houston, Texas. We have great public schools. But we do not do it by taking money away from them and sending dollars to private schools like my Republican colleagues want to do.

We need smaller class sizes. We need help with buildings. We need to work with our local school boards and our State legislators to say, okay, what works in Texas, we can help and we will send them funds to do it.

#### EDUCATION IS FIRST, LAST AND ALWAYS ABOUT CHILDREN

(Mr. TIAHRT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, education is first, last and always about children. The education debate is not about money. It is about Federal versus local control of schools and our children's future.

Republicans emphasize local education flexibility, not a Federal strait-jacket so parents and teachers can decide if they need to hire more teachers or upgrade skills of their existing teachers. We promote basic academics and encourage parental involvement, not replace the role of children's parents in their lives. We support locally designed accountability standards, not mandated Federal testing.

We have tried to drive at least 95 cents of every Federal dollar directly to the classroom, not bureaucracies bloated by expanding the Federal role in neighborhood schools.

Mr. Speaker, the liberals have made it clear that in a Democrat Congress the education focus would once again shift back to the vision of big govern-

ment, Washington-knows-best approach to dealing with local education issues.

Americans know better. They care about education and they are concerned about whether students are learning, whether they can read at grade level, and whether they are learning to add and subtract.

Under Republican leadership, we have placed the focus and quality on results with parents and teachers in control.

#### EDUCATION IS AN AMERICAN PROBLEM

(Mr. FORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, to all of my colleagues, it is interesting when I hear and all of us in this debate about Federal versus local. Let us just deal with the facts for one moment.

Ninety-four cents of every dollar raised and spent for public education is raised and spent at the local level. Virtually all the policy setting authority for all of our schools across the country, in my district in Memphis and in districts all across this country, is done at the State and local level.

If we want to point fingers or blame people, we have to blame locals for our problem. But I am not in the business of blaming. What my local school districts suggest they want, Democrats, Republicans, conservatives and liberals, big government people and little government people, are actual solutions. They want help.

They have problems because kids are learning in trailer homes in my colleagues' districts and in our districts all across the country. They have problems because they have kids learning in closets and bathrooms in schools all across this country.

Now, we can sit here and pretend that this debate is meaningful and useful about Federal or local, liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican. Reality is that there are kids that are not learning, there are kids that are caught in bathrooms and closets and trailer homes all across this country, because we would rather debate whether it is a local or Federal problem.

This is an American problem. I hope all of my colleagues will do the right thing and pass the education bill.

#### SAVING SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, Republicans will honor and strengthen Social Security. We will protect all benefits for today's seniors and ensure that Social Security is available for their grandchildren.

The administration has done nothing to save Social Security in the last 8 years even though the massive baby

boom generation will begin drawing benefits 8 years from now.

When Social Security first started, there were 42 workers to support each retiree. In a few decades, there will be only two workers per retiree. As a result, Social Security benefits will exceed contributions beginning in the year 2015 and the system will go bankrupt in the year 2037.

The Vice President touts his plan for Social Security, but his plan would do nothing to improve the program's long-term solvency and will lead to higher taxes or cuts in benefits. In fact, the Vice President's plan would leave the basic structure of Social Security untouched, essentially gambling that future generations would be able to pay the bills when the baby boom generation begins to retire in full force. This is not good. Help is on the way with a Republican White House and a Republican Congress.

#### GOVERNOR BUSH'S TAX PROPOSAL

(Mr. SHERMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, we are engaged in a great fiscal debate, a debate that is clouded by fuzzy fiscal figures. We are told by the Governor of Texas that he will provide tax relief to every American who pays taxes. This is simply not true.

Fifteen million Americans pay FICA tax that is pulled out of their wages, and these 15 million Americans who pay FICA tax but do not pay income tax will not get a single penny of relief from the Governor's proposal.

Second, he tells us that he will provide only \$223 billion of tax relief to the richest one percent of Americans. He does this by ignoring his own estate tax repeal, which will cost \$50 billion a year, \$500 billion over 10 years, meaning that his plan will actually provide well over \$700 billion to the wealthiest one percent of Americans.

Mr. Speaker, this debate is important. We need to look through the fuzzy fiscal facts and see it clearly.

#### BALANCED BUDGET SURPLUS

(Mr. CHABOT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, for 30 years when Democrats controlled the House of Representatives they talked about a balanced budget. But it was only talk. The debt continued to rise and we did not have a balanced budget.

For many years they talked about welfare reform. But it never happened. For years Democrats talked about middle class tax relief. But they raised taxes on everybody in America, not just the middle class, but everybody.

Then, 6 years ago, Republicans took over the House and we finally saw a balanced budget, we finally saw welfare reform, even though the President vetoed it twice before finally signing it